

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Update on the Implementation Plan as it relates to the Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf center-based instructional programs; lessons learned from the Hardin and Johnson County schools' presentations to the KBE in February on closing the special education achievement gap; and major findings, issues, barriers and challenges around closing the achievement gap for students with disabilities

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 167.015

History/Background:

Existing Policy. Over the past few years, the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) has focused extensive attention on services for students who are deaf/hard of hearing and blind/visually impaired throughout Kentucky. Special attention has been devoted to the operation of programs at the Kentucky School for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Deaf. In August 2004, the KBE approved a five-year Implementation Plan to provide educational services at KSB and KSD and to support school districts serving students who are blind/visually impaired or deaf/hard of hearing. This plan addresses the center-based instructional program, the residential program, outreach services and the two schools as comprehensive statewide resource centers.

As part of the April meeting, the principal from KSB and the interim principal from KSD will present information on the initiatives and programs that are in place at each school (center-based programs) to improve instruction for the students. In addition, KSD will also report on the collaborative arrangement with Boyle County Schools in the operation of the Early Education Station on the KSD campus. This program serves all KSD preschool students and most of the preschoolers from Boyle County in an integrated setting with co-teaching from both staffs.

At the last KBE meeting, teams from Johnson County Middle School and North Hardin High School presented information on what they have done in the last several years to narrow the achievement gap between all students and those with disabilities. A summary of the actions they reported and the lessons learned by these two schools will be presented (Attachment A). Both schools took specific steps to address the performance of students with disabilities that continue to have positive impact for the students; however, both schools emphasized that these steps were implemented in the context of school-wide improvement.

We are also providing the KBE with information gathered from visits to and conversations with schools, districts and special education cooperatives from across the state (Attachment B). The focus of this information is on major findings in schools that have begun to successfully close the gap, as well as the issues, barriers and challenges that have to be

addressed if the achievement gap is to be closed statewide for students with disabilities as well as other identified populations.

KDE has brought together the achievement gap coordinators, district support facilitators (who provide services to schools not meeting annual yearly progress), a cross-agency achievement gap team, staff from the Division for Exceptional Children Services, the Division of Federal Programs and Instructional Equity, and the KSB/KSD Collaborative Team to pool information in order to develop a coordinated and comprehensive approach to assisting schools in closing achievement gaps. The work of this group can be shared with the KBE at a future meeting.

Policy Issue(s):

In order to provide a continuum of services to all students who are deaf/hard of hearing or blind/visually impaired, the provision of new and expanded services need to be prioritized to fill the greater needs. Collaboration with school districts, special education cooperatives and other agencies will have to occur in order to meet these needs. Additionally, in order to assist districts and schools in closing the achievement gap, KDE staff will have to work with other agencies such as special education cooperatives to assist in these efforts.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Traditionally, there have been significant achievement gaps in test scores and success rates of students who are deaf/hard of hearing and/or blind/visually impaired. Program modifications at KSB and KSD are occurring and will continue to occur that will address achievement gap issues. The performance of all students with disabilities continues to lag behind their non-disabled peers and must be addressed in an intentional manner in order to provide these students with equal opportunities after they exit school.

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Date:

April 2005